

The Bluefish vs. Blue River

By GERSHOM BRADFORD

It is a doubtful distinction to be the sole survivor of a lost cause; especially when it is a matter of trivial importance. At last I know of no one who calls Duxbury's hurricane hole the Blue River. In early times the town somehow became divided into two groups, one calling our historic stream the Bluefish and the other the Blue River. As far as is known their differing preferences created no antagonisms, never marred any pleasant relations.

It has not been determined when the river was first named nor which term was then used, but both were referred to in colonial days. For the sake of convenience let us call one set of advocates the Blueriverers and the other the Bluefishers.

The Blueriverers based their preference on some very substantial authorities. In Pilgrim Hall there is a map in the Sparrowhawk room dated 1767, which shows our stream as the Blue River; on Charles Blaskowitz's map of our region dated 1774, likewise carries Blue River. He was one of the Deputy Surveyors of North America. In the November 1954 issue of the Proceedings of the Naval Institute is reproduced a map of Duxbury, Kingston and Plymouth Bays; the original was published in 1780 and it shows Blue River,

Moving on into the 19th century, we find Duxbury's most distinguished shipmaster, Captain Amasa Deiano, was a Blueriverer, for in the notable book (1818) of his voyages, he uses Blue River. A little later Alden Bradford, Secretary of State and historian of Massachusetts, stated that John Alden's farm was on the northern side of Blue River. It would seem that during his period the Blueriverers were in the saddle.

Ford's Map

In 1883, however, they received a body blow, for John Ford, with his splendid map, was a Bluefisher and it apparently was his influence that eventually made the name official. Justin Winsor in his authoritative history of the town followed close after dealing the coup de grace—almost. Despite these setbacks there were tenacious Blueriverers who held fast. This is shown by the contract for the bridge that was built around 1850. That document is in the Historical Society rooms and is signed by the committee of five prominent citizens. In this paper Blue River is mentioned repeatedly. There is no evidence that any one of the committee choked at the name when he attached his signature. In 1887 on the occasion of our 50th anniversary, a book was published in which there are two

views, one from, the other towards the bridge, the titles of each reading 'Blue River Bridge' and 'Bluefish Bridge'. In the Duxbury Clipper of September 30, 1954 there was reprinted an old newspaper clipping from Ellis Harkness' scrapbook in which the Blue River Bridge is mentioned.

When my father, Laurence Bradford, brought out his Historic Duxbury in 1900, it was quite surprising to see him bowing to the majority opinion by using Bluefish—this in view of his strong proclivity to espouse the cause of a worthy minority. If some sharp-eyed reader with a long memory should call my attention to the use of Bluefish in one of my contributions to the Clipper several years ago, I disclaim responsibility; it was the Editor's blue pencil.

Last summer, in Kingston, Harvey A. Soule passed away leaving widespread regret. He was born and brought up at Hall's Corner. In the 1890's he was the best first baseman in Plymouth County and knew more of old Duxbury people than any one, except Miss Mary N. Gifford. (They were classmates in Partridge Academy's class of 1883). In recent years he enjoyed coming into our river in his cabin cruiser, anchoring, having lunch and a nap, getting underway on the ebb. "Of course, it's Blue River. I never called it anything else," he would declare. So my last stalwart comrade is gone—unless this lament brings forth another.

It is singular how a name based on a weak origin will gain acceptance. Here is a noble little stream, that has floated a hundred fine ships to enrich the country's commerce, named Bluefish, from a vague report back in the dim past, that a school of that species invaded its waters. These fish did not think enough of it to return within the memory of man. While on the other hand the river's charm has delighted the eyes and hearts of many generations as it ebbed and flowed within its golden brown banks, truly a blue river—so autifully blue.

LaGRECA BROS.
ROAST STUFFED
TURKEYS
Tel. Kings. 2444

MOW LAWNS?
NOT NOW BUT SOON
Our
POWER MOWERS
ARE IN STOCK AND

SNUG HARBOR

RIVERS